

Winter 2016

WCASS Newsletter

WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL SERVICES, LTD.



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Kurt Eley, President

President's Message

ESSA Signed: Up Next IDEA Reauthorization?

Well Congress finally did something and President Obama signed the ESEA Reauthorization. Of course it is now known as ESSA, Every Student Succeeds Act. Now that this piece of education legislation is signed and sealed, we fully expect in the next year Washington DC will act on IDEA reauthorization which is way overdue. What used to be an every 7 year event, is now almost a once in a career event.

As an organization we need to be ready to contact our senators and representatives so our voice is heard. It is our voice that speaks for the students with disabilities we work with every day. I am certain that Gary as CASE President-Elect will be keeping us informed as to ideas that are being floated around Washington to be included in the IDEA

reauthorization. Some of these ideas we will embrace as being good for students and improvements over what currently exists. Other ideas we will respond with a phrase such as, "Where did that proposal originate and why?" Regardless of whether the idea is good or not, we need to make sure the Congressional representatives know where we stand on the proposals and why. If we remain quiet, we have no right to complain about the final product. Of course I am not naive enough to know that we can stop everything or get everything that we want but we must make an attempt to influence the legislation. So please be ready to receive updates from Gary and the WCASS Legislative Committee chaired by Jerry Nicholson. In

addition to the information they will be providing, they will also be asking you to contact your representatives and Wisconsin's Senators Baldwin and Johnson. We know WCASS and the SAA make a difference at the state level, so now let's work this same magic in Washington DC. Thank you in advance for your contacts.

Finally, I want to thank each of you for choosing what I consider the most rewarding and satisfying profession one could choose. Even though the work is not easy, the affirmation I get when I sit in an IEP meeting where the student has grown so much you are considering dismissal is truly priceless. It also makes up for the times when the IEP meeting is shall we say, slightly more contentious. Anyway, thank you all for work!



Executive Director's Report

By: Gary Myrah

IMPORTANT:
We need school personnel at these meetings to make sure our concerns are heard. I would encourage each director to seek representatives from their districts to attend such as principals, pupil service personnel as well as teachers. This may be an opportunity to have the support of a major news outlet to share our story with the hope of developing a support within the communities as well as the state legislature.

There is an increasing concern for the mental/behavioral issues facing the children in Wisconsin. Senator Luther Olsen held an informational hearing for the Senate Education Committee on January 6th and the SAA invited representatives from Adams-Friendship, Baraboo, La Crosse, Menasha, and CESA 6 to share the concerns in their districts as well as their efforts to design programs that will be sustainable for generations, not just years.

These districts were chosen as a cross section of Wisconsin and because their involvement with incentive programs/grants designed to provide a systematic change to provide improved support to children in public schools.

Also in January the Gannett Corporation, also known as the USA TODAY NETWORK – Wisconsin began a focus on children mental health. They have committed to providing a series of articles of the dilemmas we face in Wisconsin. You may be interested in reading these articles. The weblink to the series is: *Kids in Crisis*:

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/local/2016/01/13/guide-full-kids-crisis-coverage/78738532/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>

They will also be coordinating ten (10) town hall meetings in February and March at various locations throughout Wisconsin (primarily in their market area). They plan to have summary articles upon completion of these town meetings.

IMPORTANT: We need school personnel at these meetings to make sure our concerns are heard. I would encourage each director to seek representatives from their districts to attend such as principals, pupil service personnel as well as teachers. This may be an opportunity to have the support of a major news outlet to share our story with the hope of developing a support within the communities as well as the state legislature. Consider it a social event and have a team go out to dinner before or after the town hall meeting. This will also offer you a perspective of concerns by parents and citizens. Let's all work together on this effort.

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USA TODAY NETWORK-
Wisconsin's Kids in Crisis series
explores youth mental health

Executive Director Report continued

Kids in Crisis | Town Hall Meeting

USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin will hold ten town hall meetings and a “Call to Action” event in Madison on Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day as part of its [Kids in Crisis](#) series on children’s mental health.

| | | |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Monday, Feb. 22 6:00pm | Silver Lake College, Generose Enrichment Center, 2406 South Alverno Rd. | Manitowoc |
| Tuesday, Feb. 23 7:00pm | Brown County Public Library, 515 Pine St. | Green Bay |
| Wednesday, Feb. 24 6:00pm | Mid-State Technical College, Community Engagement Room 126, 2600 W. Fifth St. | Marshfield |
| Thursday, Feb. 25 6:00pm | McMillan Memorial Library, Fine Arts Center, 490 E. Grand Ave. | Wisconsin Rapids |
| Monday, Feb. 29 6:00pm | Fond du Lac Public Library, McLane Meeting room, 32 Sheboygan St. | Fond du Lac |
| Wednesday, March 2 6:00pm | Mid-State Technical College, Community Engagement Rooms 634 and 635, 1001 Centerpoint Drive | Stevens Point |
| Thursday, March 3 6:00pm | Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel, Athearn Ballroom, 1 North Main St. | Oshkosh |
| Tuesday, March 8 7:00pm | University of Wisconsin-Marathon County Auditorium, 518 S. Seventh Ave. | Wausau |
| Wednesday, March 9 6:00pm | Mead Public Library, Rocca meeting room, 710 N 8th St. | Sheboygan |
| Thursday, March 10 7:00pm | Lawrence University, Warch Campus Center Cinema, 711 E. Boldt Way | Appleton |
| Thursday, May 5 (Event tentatively scheduled to start at 10 a.m.) | Overture Center | Madison |

WCASS Upcoming Training Dates & Events

February 3-5 WCASS Winter Conference: 3 days, Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton

February 16-17 Wisconsin Federal Funding Conference: 2 days, Kalahari Resort & Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells

May 4-6 WCASS 2016 Spring Conference: 3 days, Crowne Plaza, Madison

Please visit our website at http://www.wcass.org/events/event_list.asp

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ELECT: “NO LONGER THE INVISIBLE CHILDREN OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS” JOHN PETERSON



With 2015 coming to a close, we are hearing a lot of articles and updates that are celebrating the 40 year anniversary of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), better known today as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The changes in how we educate, support, and provide services to our students with disabilities over the past 40 plus years cannot be understated or minimized. We have come light years from where we were as a nation in the early 1970's to where we are now on how we serve our students with disabilities.

Before 1975, most children with disabilities were denied an education solely based on disability. Children with disabilities were invisible in our public schools. Whether it was done out of malice, ignorance, and/or indifference, it was widely accepted as national policy to exclude children with disabilities from public schools. Although there are many examples throughout the nation of laws that acted as barriers for students with disabilities, here is one example so you can gain a flavor of where we were as a country prior to changes in law in the mid 70's. In 1958, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that compulsory attendance did not apply to students with mental impairments. Simply put, if you had any kind of disability, regardless of need, you were not required to attend public schools. Not only were policies like this ubiquitous towards children with disabilities throughout the US, there were also examples of laws that were devastating to parents who had a child with a disability. For example, in North Carolina, it was a crime for a parent of a child with a disability to attempt to enroll their child in a public school district. In other words, you would be engaging in criminal act if you took your child with a

President Elect continued

disability to the main office of a public school and asked for registration paperwork!

Despite these widespread practices, several parents began to push back. They brought forward lawsuits against both local and state educational agencies invoking the Supreme Court landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ruled that all students were guaranteed equal educational opportunity. There were two key Supreme Court decisions in the early 1970's that helped pave the way for students with disabilities and their families: *PARC v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v. D.C. Board of Education* (1972). Based on these court cases and continuing pressure from advocacy groups, a series of Congressional hearings were held in 1975. Evidence from these hearings found that several states were still falling short on adequately educating students with disabilities. Here are some of the findings from these Congressional hearings:

- More than 8 million students with handicapping conditions required special education throughout the US
- Of these 8 million students, only 3.9 million were receiving appropriate special education services
- 2.5 million students were receiving inappropriate educational services
- 1.75 million students were receiving NO educational services at all

At the end of these Congressional hearings, members of Congress were so moved by the testimony and information shared that they wrote the following conclusion:

“The long-range implications of these statistics are that public agencies and taxpayers will spend billions of dollars over the lifetimes of these individuals to maintain such persons as dependents and in a minimally acceptable lifestyle. With proper education services, many would be able to become productive citizens, contributing to society instead of being forced to remain

burdens. Others, through such services, would increase their independence, thus reducing their dependence on society. There is no pride in being forced to receive economic assistance. Not only does this have negative effects upon the handicapped person, but it has far-reaching effects for such person's family.

Providing educational services will ensure against persons needlessly being forced into institutional settings. One need only look at public residential institutions to find thousands of persons whose families are no longer able to care for them and who themselves have received no educational services. Billions of dollars are expended each year to maintain persons in these subhuman conditions . . .

Parents of handicapped children all too frequently are not able to advocate the rights of their children because they have been erroneously led to believe that their children will not be able to lead meaningful lives...It should not...be necessary for parents throughout the country to continue utilizing the courts to assure themselves a remedy...” [Excerpt taken from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/art/history.spec.ed.law.htm>]

On November 19, 1975, EAHCA was enacted into the law; school districts were now required to educate students with disabilities. The final regulations for EAHCA were enacted on October 1, 1977. From this time to the present, EAHCA has seen several changes. Here are some key historical events and the impact that it had on how we provide services to our students with disabilities and their families:

1986The EAHCA is amended with the addition of the Handicapped Children's Protection Act. This amendment makes it clear that students and parents have rights under EAHCA and Section 504.

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President Elect continued

- 1990 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is enacted into law. ADA adopts Section 504 regulations as part of the ADA statute. In turn, numerous 504 Plans for individual students start to become more common place in school districts.
- 1990 The EAHCA is amended and is now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). With this name change came many changes to the old law. One of the most impactful changes to our students with disabilities was the addition of transition services. School Districts were now required to look at outcomes and assisting students with disabilities in transitioning from high school to postsecondary life.
- 1997 IDEA is reauthorized. This amendment calls for students with disabilities to be included on state and district-wide assessments. Also, general education teachers are now required to be a member of the IEP team.
- 2004 IDEA is reauthorized. This amendment calls for more accountability at the state and local levels, as data on 20 indicators is required. Another notable change requires school district to provide adequate instruction and intervention for students to help keep them out of special education.

With each amendment and reauthorization, it is clear that we have seen several advances for the rights of our students with disabilities and their families. Many of us have seen significant changes in our lifetime for how we support and service our students with disabilities and their families. It has been over ten years since IDEA was last reauthorized. With the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act on the verge of being reauthorized, there is little doubt that IDEA reauthorization will be right around the corner. The questions that we need to ask ourselves are as follows: what amendments should be made to IDEA and how can we better serve our students and their families?

Previous changes to IDEA could not have taken place without input from families, students, educators, and advocacy groups. With this in mind, my hope is that both WCASS and CASE continue to have a voice with our legislators as to how to best service our students with disabilities and support their families in the process. I would encourage you to think about additions and/or changes that would benefit IDEA and the students we serve and share them with a member of the WCASS Board of Directors. Thank you in advance for your advocacy.

WCASS Spirit Wear



Keep your eyes Open... The Web Store for WCASS Spirit Wear is coming Soon!!

Guidance for Progress Monitoring for Specific Learning Disabilities

Greg Nyen, Director of Student Services
Stevens Point Area School District

Recently the Stevens Point Area Public School District began the process of reviewing our screening and progress monitoring tools for use in our Multi-levelled Systems of Support (MLSS). Not only were our school psychologists reporting difficulty attaining adequate stability of baseline and progress monitoring data but also in the area of reliability of our trend-line slope. Our teachers were spending inordinate amounts of time probing and re-probing our struggling learners sometimes exhausting all of the probes available to them only to find that our data was unreliable and at times, invalid. Educators and administrators alike were frustrated to say the least.

While interviewing a Computer Adaptive Test program provider who shall remain nameless, they referenced a document that the Department of Public Instruction had provided to them as a reference. Enter the ***Progress Monitoring for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Eligibility Decisions*** authored by members of the special education team at Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI).

Co-authored by the school psychology consultant, the specific learning disabilities consultant and a member of the procedural compliance self-assessment/complaint investigation team, this resource provides a much needed level of clarity and reassurance to those of us in education who must make meaning and high stakes decisions from the data sets that are the product of our MLSS efforts. Reassurance and validation of many difficult conversations began to set in at the bottom of page one under the heading of Decision Errors as I read, "Educational, employment and community-based outcomes for students with special educational needs are poor in comparison to students educated entirely in the general educational system. Therefore, LEAs are keen to ensure they do not make the mistake of identifying a student as needing special educational services when s/he does not." The section ends with an exclamation point by underscoring how errors may be mitigated by using valid and reliable data.

The document is also a practical tool for the continuous improvement of MLSS. Page 3 outlines the beginning of a very useful table offering a side-by-side comparison of Computer Adaptive Tests and Curriculum Based Measures as they consider the theoretical foundations of probe: brevity; specific skill acquisition; multiple equal, or nearly equal, form availability; sensitivity to small change; reliability and validity; and scientifically based practice. The side-by-side comparison outlines the strengths and weaknesses of two popular and prevalent methods of measurement that don't require a background in school psychology to understand.

As an administrator responsible for the creation and shared oversight of our own MLSS, I have often struggled with the 'oh well, the data is what it is' approach by some of my colleagues who don't understand the significance of placing a disability label of a student. This document was like gold to me! It validated everything that our student services department members had been espousing for months (since December 1st, 2013 to be exact) and yet also provided a reference point in the form of the table comparison that my colleagues could understand. Job well done by the WDPI!

Maintaining Our Unified Political Voice

John Forester

The SAA was established in the early 1990's to create a stronger, more unified political voice for Wisconsin public school administrators. Ironically, the outstanding efforts of SAA members to build stronger relationships with their legislators has the potential to splinter and weaken the SAA's political voice unless we carefully maintain our consensus-based approach to statewide education policy development.

Last year, in response to a deteriorating education policy environment in the State Capitol, the SAA developed its Evidence-Based Policy Agenda and encouraged SAA members to engage their local constituencies (parents, business, news media, etc.) and build stronger relationships with their legislators.

The result? We have more SAA members involved in advocacy than ever before. And with that greater engagement and visibility comes more communication between legislators and administrators.

Invariably, these increased discussions regarding the challenges we face and shortcomings of Wisconsin education policy have led, and will continue to lead, to conversations about legislative solutions to specific education policy questions. Clearly, this is an extremely positive outgrowth of our collective advocacy efforts.

However, legislation developed by local school administrators and their legislators could very well have a statewide impact. And that really requires a statewide conversation among SAA members to ensure that the legislation has broad SAA support before we move it forward.

Anything less risks splintering the SAA's political voice, and weakening the SAA's ability to influence education policy development on behalf of the students we serve.

The SAA encourages all members to bring the SAA into your bill development efforts so we can assist in developing legislation that has member support statewide and maintains the SAA's unified voice inside the State Capitol.

Thanks for listening and, as always, thanks for all of your efforts on behalf of Wisconsin school children. Every child, every day!

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ALLIANCE

REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL CHILDREN



WCASS Region News

Region 1 Chair: Tanya Fredrich, Ph.D.

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For information from this region, please contact Tanya Fredrich

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Region 7 Chair: Lisa Misco

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For information from this region, please contact Lisa Misco

Region 8 Chair: David Kwiatkowski

davek@cesa8.org

"Life is great in Region 8! Thanks to our outstanding RSN Director, Deb Wall, and our Phenomenal Executive Director, Gary Myrah, we have been able to keep the special education leaders and principals well informed of pressing issues in special education in our state WCASS Updates at each of our schedule RSN Meeting on September 25, November 13 and December 18, 2016. We have been given generous time and excellent opportunity in this format to have crucial discussion of how these impact our local schools, parents and especially our students in CESA 8, specifically. My only regret has been that we still have key leaders out in our local district who can not find the time or the opportunity to attend these local meetings. Deb Wall and our top-notch Special Education Assistant, Jessica Kaczmarek do an excellent job sharing information in print form through Live Binders with all who can't attend, but this can not nearly match the benefit of the live discussion and networking that take place at these meetings. I am hopeful we will be able to convince all those who are missing out to find away to attend the remaining meeting scheduled for the school year on: March 9, April 29, and June 9, 2016!

Our April 29 meeting will be one that no one will want to miss as this will be our Region 8 Awards Day and will be held at the superb venue provided by Waubee Lodge in Lakewood, WI. I am confident that Russ and his staff will again do a great job in making this day memorable for our Award Recipients, their sponsors and all who attend.

We are hoping the our WCASS President, Kurt Eley can accompany Gary Myrah in attending that day as well! I know I won't have to twist their arms too hard, if they are able, since we have enjoyed this great

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WCASS Region News

location together immensely in the past! It may be a little early for a pontoon boat tour of Waubee Lake for this event, but who knows... Fun Stuff often just happens in the Northwoods!"

Region 8 members should watch their email in mid-February for a call for nominations for WCASS Region 8 Awards and plan to bring their written nominations forward at the March RSN Meeting or by other means March 25, 2016.

As always, if anyone has questions, concerns or need for help in joining or becoming more active in WCASS, they should feel free to email me at davek@cesa8.org or chat by cell at 715-927-1349.

As always...Thanks for listening!

Dave

Region 9 Chair: Karen Baker

kbaker@antigo.k12.wi.us

The Region 9 Leadership Meeting was held December 4, 2016 at the CESA 9 building in Tomahawk. This CESA 9 meeting included WCASS updates Gary Myrah, WCASS Executive Director. Topics included 1) Continued Concerns for Speech/Language Shortage and Delivery of Services, Student Mental/Behavioral Health Needs, Open Records Request for September 1 Board Report, CASE news, and Legislative Activity (Wisconsin/Federal). Looking toward spring budgeting please be reminded that the CASE Annual Fall Conference will be held next September 25-27, 2016 at the Milwaukee Hyatt in Milwaukee, WI. This is a national conference that will be more assessable to Wisconsin Educators. Please contact me for additional information to address any need or concern that you may have as you serve students throughout each of your respective districts.

Region 10 Chair: Lorna Margenau

lmargenau@cesa10.k12.wi.us

CESA 10 hosted a presentation by Tyson Zitzow, Best Practice in the Assessment of English Learners for Special Education. The one day presentation was designed in three parts, the English Learner, Pre-referral Phase, and Special Education Referral & Evaluation Phase. Within the first component information was shared around second language acquisition, language proficiency testing, and acculturation. The second component included information around team membership, RtI/Pre-referral intervention activities, ICEL-RIOT, and problem solving process. The final component included information on due process requirements, informal assessment, and standardized testing. Armed with extensive research and over 100 resources, Tyson shared with CESA 10 member districts research based best practice and considerations for EL students. Some quick data; in 2012/13 ELs made up 9% of students enrolled in school, with 8.5% identified as having a disability, equaling 13% of all students 2013).

More than 70% of ELs score "below basic" in reading on National Assessment of Education Progress and ELs have the highest dropout rate among ethnic groups, 43% (American Teacher Jan/Feb 2013).

Region 11 Chair: Dawn Western

dawnw@cesa11.k12.wi.us

We have been having discussions are mental health issues, testing, and pilot IEP forms among others. Our current book study is Visible Learning by John Hattie. For further information, contact Dawn Western.

Region 12 Chair: Vicki Lemke

vlemke@phillips.k12.wi.us

For information from this region, please contact Vicki Lemke

Legislative Update: Where do we go from here?

By Jerry Nicholson

We can easily become discouraged or negative about the current political environment. As I reflect on my first several months in the legislative chair position for WCASS, so much has happened. I can honestly say that I think this may be one of the most politically challenging environments we have faced in public education. Yet, if we fall into focusing on the negative, we allow the discourse to be controlled by those against public education. I am reminded of the old saying “what you focus on grows”. If we focus on all the negative public education discourse and legislation, then we simply reinforce and strengthen their message.

So now what? Where do we go from here?

I would like to start with thanking John Forester and Gary Myrah for all their hard work and advocating so strongly for the children we serve in public education. The two of them lead by example and I am enjoying learning how to share my voice by their example.

The best thing we can do is to continue to speak out for our students. Advocating for public education funding and services that our student’s need to be successful. As student services directors, we have the honorable obligation of advocating for the students and families that are often unheard. Sometimes they have no voice or often their voice is disregarded. This is where our obligation begins.

We have the power and privilege of our positions, but it goes well beyond that. I recently injured my leg, requiring me to use crutches. A small adjustment, but one that has reminded of my privilege of being an able bodied person. It has reminded me of the challenges that our students face based on disability status, mental health needs,

race, gender, gender expression, and socio economic status. We have the honorable obligation of speaking out for those that are disadvantaged by the structures and assumptions in our society and culture.

I recently saw and was part of a great example of a group of directors speaking out and advocating at a political level. As a member of the Dane County Directors group and the Children’s Mental Health Collaborative of Dane County I was privileged to join several other directors in advocating for mental health services for our students at a recent county budget hearing. This all started with the collaborative approach of a fellow director who shared information about a county pilot program that was benefiting students in her district. With her open sharing, several directors became interested in working to advocate for the expansion of the program. This resulted in three of us attending the public budget hearings and an opportunity for us to speak at the hearing. I am so proud to be associated with the group of directors. Our voices become so much more impactful when we speak as a group. I can say with certainty that our voices were heard. We got immediate feedback and contact information from multiple members of the board of supervisors. As a result of this advocacy, the entire program was expanded in the county budget, with almost a doubling of resources from the county level. If we didn’t speak nothing would’ve changed.

We have nothing to lose by speaking out, but our students have everything to gain if we do. This makes the decision easy for me. Please continue to take risks and challenge yourself to be an advocate politically for students. They need us to be courageous!



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Membership Opportunities

Thank you to all who have renewed your WCASS and CASE memberships!

Want to join or renew WCASS membership? <http://www.wcass.org/> (click join-renew tab)

Want to join or renew CASE membership? Join CEC and then select the Council of Administrators of Special Education special interest division. <http://www.cec.sped.org/Membership>

Members! There are many new directors around the state this year. Please take time to reach out to them and encourage them to join our organization. Teaming together helps us all become more effective leaders.

Feel free to contact me with any type of membership questions throughout the year.

Tammy Lampereur tlampereur@ashwaubenon.k12.wi.us